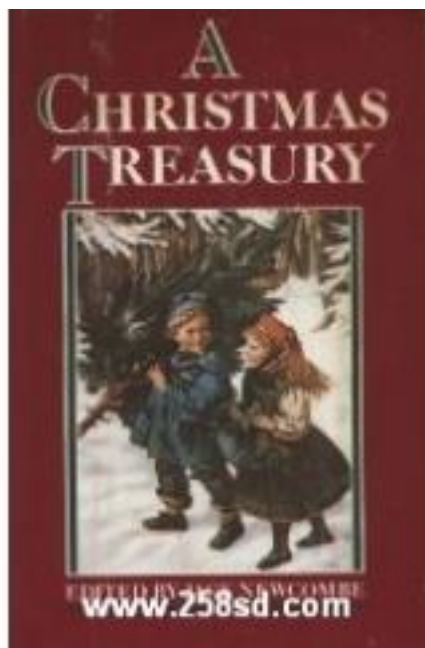


Jack Nwecombe



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INTRODUCTION
When I couldn't imagine Christmas existing far beyond the high banks of
now that lined the streets of my hometown. The stories I first listened
and those I later read only strengthened the impression that Christmas
meant to take place where I lived so easily with the long seasons
expectations sights sounds; the increased reminders of good and evil; the
mandatory churchgoing; the seeking of harmony among family and fiends; the
belief in small miracles and in the spirits released through the ages of Dickens.
There was always snow in Vermont--except for one frightening year--and it wasn't
until I finally left home that I realized Christmas might thrive without it--that it
could take place in the imagination--one properly stoked by memories and the
rereading of a favorite book or Christmas story. The images have traveled long

distances with me¼ to
olidays spent in Britain¼ Europe¼ California¼ New York¼ Washington¼
ld once in Bethlehem¼ Pennsylvania.
When I was young we listened to stories about Christmas¼ read about
hristmas¼ waited with anticipation for the gift book that was always
rare under the tree. Oh¼ of course¼ we sang about Christmas and in
:hool participated in verse-speaking choirs on Christmas themes. But it
as through the story reading that we supported the fantasy of a season
pecially made for those of us lucky
3or¼ in Vermont.
enough to be young¼ and not too
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